



Press Release

22 March 17

B'nai B'rith Australia/New Zealand expresses its strong support for the retention of 18C. and commends the Government for its support of our multicultural society delivered by the Prime Minister.

The law in its present form makes clear that Australia is a nation that opposes insulting, offending or humiliating people based on their race, religion or ethnicity. We see no persuasive argument for weakening this provision.

Arguments that 18C inhibits freedom of speech ignore that the following clause 18D provides sufficient protection for people if they are engaged in artistic expression or political debate.

Some of the arguments calling for amendment of 18C are based on assertions that the processes leading to the enforcement of 18C in the courts, i.e. the processes adopted by the Human Rights Commission, are faulty.

To this, we offer two responses.

Firstly, over the two decades since the legislation was adopted by Parliament, the Human Rights Commission has handled many hundreds of complaints. Nearly all have been handled quietly, without publicity, and have led to reconciliation between the offender and the aggrieved party. This does not indicate any need for the law to be changed.

Secondly, to the extent that there are flaws in the Human Rights Commission's procedures, then B'nai B'rith would support ongoing review and evaluation, as it would for any aspect of the nation's civil administration. If such flaws exist, they can be addressed without the need to amend the law under which the Commission operates.

B'nai B'rith International has championed the cause of human rights since 1843. B'nai B'rith is recognized as a vital voice in promoting Jewish unity and continuity, a staunch defender of the State of Israel, With a presence around the world, we are the Global Voice of the Jewish Community. Visit www.bnaibrith.org.au

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